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OFWAT UNVEILS ANOTHER DRAIN ON CONSUMER FINANCES

- **Water bills set to rise by 4.6% or £16 on average from 1 April 2011^[1]**
- **Average annual bill for water and sewerage will increase to £356 in 2011^[1]**
- **Households urged to consider moving to a water meter that could save them £56 a year^[2].**

Ofwat's announcement today that the average water bill will rise by 4.6% to £356 in April has set alarms bells ringing for consumers. uSwitch.com, the independent price comparison and switching service, warns the £16 increase could squeeze the last drops out of household budgets.

Ann Robinson, Director of Consumer Policy at uSwitch.com, says: "Although the increase may only seem like a drop in the ocean, it comes after a tough couple of months for consumers, who have seen their budgets under more pressure than ever before. After a full round of energy price rises, increased VAT and inflation that is outstripping pay rises, consumers may feel like they're going under.

"An increase in water prices is also hard for consumers to take as they don't have the option of switching to a cheaper supplier like they can with other home essentials. The only choice available is to go on to a water meter which could save consumers £56 a year.

"As a rule of thumb, if there are more bedrooms than people in a household then a water meter could be more cost effective. Consumers can also use the uSwitch.com water calculator to find out if being on a meter could save them money. Water meters may become compulsory in the future under Government plans, but if consumers can save money by being on one, they should act now.

“However, if a water meter isn’t the right choice, consumers should look at where they can make savings. Switching energy supplier can save up to £458 a year, while being on the best deal for your home phone, broadband and TV bundle can cut £261 off your household bills.”

Pros and cons of being on a water meter:

- If you are on a meter you pay for what you use, therefore cutting back on the amount you use will save you money.
- If you switch to a water meter and find that you are not saving money or are unhappy with the change, you can switch back to unmeasured charging within 12 months.
- The general rule of thumb: if there are less people in your house than bedrooms (e.g. two people living in a four bedroom family home) then you could save money by switching to a water meter.
- For larger families, being on a water meter may not be cost effective as your water consumption may be high. Customers living in compulsory metering areas will need support in regulating and reducing consumption.

For more information visit www.uSwitch.com or call 0800 093 06 07

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Notes to editors

1. Ofwat announcement 25.02.2011 - http://www.ofwat.gov.uk/mediacentre/pressnotices2008/prs_pn0211bills
2. Source: Ofwat - 'Average household bills 2010-11':
http://www.ofwat.gov.uk/consumerissues/chargesbills/prs_inf_charges2010-11.pdf;

About us

uSwitch.com is a free, impartial, online and telephone-based comparison and switching service, helping consumers compare prices on gas, electricity, water, heating cover, home telephone, broadband, digital television, mobile phones and personal finance products including mortgages, credit cards, current accounts and insurance. In 2010 uSwitch.com celebrated ten years of saving customers money.

The service is also available via fax and post. Consumers should fax 020 7233 5933 or write to Customer Services, uSwitch.com, Centro 3, 19 Mandela Street, London, NW1 0DU with their postcode and usage details.

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